

Melo Talk: On the Meaning and Use of the Term "Melodrama" in the American Trade Press

STEVE NEALE

THIS PAPER IS CONCERNED WITH THE WAY the term "melodrama" (or its shortened and slangier form, "meller") was used in the American trade press to describe and to categorize films. To that extent, it is concerned with melodrama as a generic category (and a generic corpus) in Hollywood. It is also concerned with the meaning of the term as used and the light its meaning and use both cast on melodrama and its history, on the one hand, and on Hollywood and its genres, on the other. I concentrate on the classical period in general and the period 1938 to 1960 in particular, though reference will also be made to the preclassical period and to one or two films made after 1960.¹ My principal sources for the classical period are *the Film Daily* (and its predecessor, *Wid's Daily*), *the Hollywood Reporter*, *Motion Picture Herald* (and its predecessors *Exhibitors Herald* and *Exhibitors Herald and Motography*), and, in particular, *Variety*.² For the preclassical period, I have consulted *Variety*, the *Moving Picture World*, *Exhibitors Film Exchange*, *Exhibitors Herald*, and the *Biograph Bulletins*.³ I have also consulted the five volumes of film reviews collected and edited by Anthony Slide.⁴

Occasional (and usually fairly brief) reference has been made to the way "melodrama" figured as a trade category or industry term in Hollywood in some of the writings on melodrama and the cinema that have appeared at an ever growing rate over the past twenty years or so.⁵ In nearly every case, however, such references are themselves unreferenced, and few if any instances or contemporary quotes are actually cited.⁶ Instead, statements are made on the authority (if any) of recent secondary sources and are then rendered subordinate either to the reiteration of what has now become the "standard" or "orthodox" account of melodrama in Hollywood and its putative meaning, generic location, and theatrical provenance or else to the analysis of films or groups of films identified as melodrama on the basis of this account alone. Either that, or the issue of Hollywood's

use of the term is ignored altogether.⁷ There are two major exceptions here: Russell Merritt's article "Melodrama: Post-Mortem for a Phantom Genre" and Ben Singer's more recent "Female Power in the Serial-Queen Melodrama: The Etiology of an Anomaly."⁸ Both pieces draw extensively on sources contemporary with the period they discuss (principally the twenties, in Merritt's case, and the teens and early twenties in Singer's); both cite their sources and include quotations and examples; and, significantly, both offer to the standard account either a major challenge (in Merritt's case) or substantial revision and historical modification (in the case of Singer). Although, as we shall see, Merritt's argument (and evidence) is partial and misleading (and unwittingly consonant, at times, with aspects of the standard account), Singer's is extremely important. It is itself in some respects partial and misleading, too, but only when discussing melodrama and its meanings in the period subsequent to the one with which he is principally concerned. Here, instead of drawing on contemporary primary sources, as he does for the earlier period, he tends to rely on secondary standard accounts and hence tends to reiterate the standard or orthodox view.

Before presenting my own evidence and argument, it would be appropriate at this point briefly to summarize the standard account and in particular to identify its principal elements. There seem to be five main elements overall, though of course specific accounts vary in the degree of attention or weight they are given. The first is that melodrama was a pejorative term, a term of abuse, and that it was therefore a term the industry itself tended to avoid.⁹ The second (sometimes closely related to the first) is that melodrama was opposed, or counterposed, to "realism" and hence often meant, or implied, either "stylization" (at best) or "failed" or "outmoded" realism (at worst).¹⁰ The third is that although melodrama is often best characterized as a cross-generic mode, hence as a phenomenon which in Hollywood tended

The Velvet Light Trap, Number 32, Fall 1993
Copyright © 1993 by the University of Texas Press

to lead a somewhat scattered and fragmented generic life, its most consistent associations were with pathos, romance, domesticity, the familial, and the "feminine," and therefore its most persistent generic locations were the "family melodrama" and the woman's film.¹¹ The fourth is that the woman's film, in particular, led what Christine Gledhill called a "lowly" and "humble" existence.¹² And the fifth is that the cultural antecedent of the woman's film was the popular stage melodrama of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose own "lowly" status partly accounts for the lowly status of the woman's film itself.¹³

Evidence from the trade press suggests that all these points require either modification or outright rejection. In my view, points three, four, and five are the most important and interesting ones, so I shall concentrate mainly on them. Before doing so, though, it is worth saying something about the other two.

The first thing to say about the first point is that far from avoiding them, all the trade journals used the terms "melodrama" and "meller" very frequently in their reviews and discussions of films. (On my calculations, they are used in reviews of over a thousand different films between January 1938 and December 1959 in *Variety* alone.)¹⁴ In addition, production companies, distributors, and studios also used them, from time to time, in trade advertisements for films aimed primarily, I assume, at exhibitors. (Hence Paramount's ad for *So Evil My Love*, stressing the film's box-office success in its opening weeks of release: "Opens 22% Ahead of Previous Top Melodrama of 1948."¹⁵ Other instances include Metro's ad for *Alias Jimmy Valentine* [1920]—"the most sensational melodrama of the decade"—and Pioneer's ad for *The Still Alarm* [1918]—"The Greatest Melodrama of All Time."¹⁶

The second thing to say is that although there are indeed occasions upon which these terms are, in reviews at least, used as pejorative in themselves (as in "baldly stated, the story is only so much melodrama," in a review of *The Whispering Chorus* [Famous Players-Lasky, 1918] in the *Moving Picture World*),¹⁷ it is in fact much more common, particularly in the later classical period, to find them used neutrally, as terms of description or generic classification. A melodrama can be good, bad, indifferent, or standard, depending upon the nature of the film and, of course, the judgment of its reviewer. Hence the following, from reviews of films whose titles I indicate, where necessary, in parentheses subsequent to the relevant quotations:

"Good melodrama" (*Dark City*, Paramount, 1950)

"Class melodrama" (*The Snake Pit*, Fox, 1948)

"Splendid melodrama" (*Victory*, Paramount-Artcraft, 1929)

"Weak melodrama" (*Crime of the Century*, Republic, 1946)

"Poor melodrama" (*Terror on a Train*, MGM, 1953)

"Average melodrama" (*Danger Signal*, Warner Brothers, 1945)

"Choice melodrama of high quality" (*Somewhere in the Night*, Fox, 1946)

"Masterpiece of melodrama" (*Notorious*, RKO, 1946)

"Standard melodrama" (*City of Shadows*, Republic, 1955)

"Fairly good melodrama" (*Storm Fear*, United Artists, 1955)

"Superior melodrama" (*Mr. District Attorney*, Columbia, 1947)

"Melodrama" (*Son of Frankenstein*, Universal, 1939)¹⁸

"Realism," meanwhile, in contrast to "melodrama," is a term the trade press tends to avoid. There are occasions on which melodrama, where used pejoratively, is taken to imply or is used to indicate a failure of *plausibility* (hence of verisimilitude, rather than realism).¹⁹ But there are occasions also in which realism or realistic is used in tandem with melodrama, and these are particularly interesting, since in most instances they seem to imply either that the film in question is marked by a particularly powerful, intense, or convincing set of appropriate generic effects or, and this is perhaps even more interesting, since it may indicate something about one particular site of melodrama historically, that it involves sordid, sensational, or low-life events, characters, and settings and hence draws on aspects of Naturalism. Thus, "Moriarty's slow, venomous approach toward the man he hates, the snake-like glitter of his voracious eyes, the storm of passion which shakes his robust frame, the frenzied outbreak of baffled rage made manifest when he dashes the empty and useless revolver with which he tried to shoot his enemy to the floor is the climax of melodramatic realism" (*Sherlock Holmes, Essanay/V-L-S-E*, 1916).²⁰ And thus, more briefly, "powerful melodrama . . . Down to earth and highly realistic" (*The Postman Always Rings Twice*, MGM, 1946); "punchy action, realistic melodrama and sustained audience interest" (*Bataan*, MGM, 1943); "ultra-realistic melodrama dealing with various and sordid aspects of a backwash of modern life" (*The*



Descriptions of Fox's *The Snake Pit* (1948) as "class melodrama" and RKO's *Notorious* (1946) as a "masterpiece of melodrama" suggest that the label "melodrama" itself was a neutral rather than a derogatory term.

Man with the Golden Arm, United Artists, 1955); and "virile realist melodrama" (*The Big House*, MGM, 1930).²¹

It will, I am sure, be apparent by now that there is little correlation between many of the quotes used so far, the kinds of films to which they refer, and the tenets of the standard account. The mark of these films is not pathos, romance, and domesticity but action, adventure, and thrills; not "feminine" genres and the woman's film but war films, adventure films, horror films, and thrillers, genres traditionally thought of as, if anything, "male."

Ben Singer draws attention to similar kinds of discrepancy in his article on serials and serial queens in the teens and early twenties. Drawing on contemporary essays and reviews, he notes a division in description and terminology between "The Tear-Drenched Drama" and the "drama of heart-ache" (to cite a contemporary source), on the one hand, and melodrama on the other.²²

As one quickly discerns from reading newspaper reviews and magazine essays from this period, the term's [i.e., melodrama's] crucial, defining connotation in this period related not to pathos and heightened emotionality but rather to elements antithetical to Hollywood's domestic melodrama's — action, thrilling sensationalism and physical violence. Thus, in a 1906 essay entitled "The Taint of Melodrama," a critic noted: "Ask the next person you meet casually how he defines a melodramatic story, and he will probably tell you that it is a hodge-podge of extravagant adventures, full of blood and thunder, clashing swords and hair's breadth escapes."²³

Referring explicitly to the standard, cinema studies account²⁴ and perhaps at this point swayed by it to some degree, Singer suggests that "the term's meaning has shifted since the decades around the turn of the century."²⁵ However, evidence suggests that if there was a shift of this kind, it certainly did not occur prior to the 1960s. Throughout the classical period (the period of reference, by and large, for the standard account itself), the term "melodrama" continued precisely to mean what it did in the teens and twenties.

All I can do at this point is to cite as many examples as space will allow. I do so on the one hand to try and convey an impression of the term's ubiquity and on the other to try and convey an impression of the consistency and coherence with which it was used.

First, then, some examples, to supplement Singer's findings, from the tens, the teens, and the twenties: "another melodramatic subject full of exciting



The routine use of "melodrama" during the classical period to describe such films as *The Big House* (1930), *Bataan* (1943), and *The Big Heat* (1953) suggests the term was used most frequently to designate "male" genres of action, adventure, and thrills.

situations" (*A Railway Tragedy*, Gaumont, 1904);²⁶ "sufficiently melodramatic to be thrilling" (*Nick Carter and the Acrobats*, Eclair, 1910); "of the melodramatic class which appeals to the lovers of exciting chases and rough work" (*For a Western Girl*, Bison, 1910); "as a rule movies of the melodramatic sort are expected to have several thrills but this story has been so realistically told by the camera one is handed thrill upon thrill" (*The Spoilers*, Selig, 1914); "melodrama with all the features that combine to thrill an audience and win applause" (*The Strike at "Little Jonny" Mine*, Essanay, 1911); "'The Devil's Bait' presents a rather gruesome tale of spectacular nature. There are many gripping melodramatic scenes" (*The Devil's Bait*, Barba—General Fortune, 1917); "Pure Melodrama with the Accent on the 'Melo,'" "the action is brisk and the thrills are many" (*Steelheart*, Vitagraph, 1921); "Has Good Number of Thrills and Stunts that Provide Excitement," "Will Please Admirers of Melodrama" (*Stranger than Fiction*, Associated First National, 1921); "Fine Railroad Melodrama with Good Action and Plenty of Thrills" (*Smiles Are Trump*, Fox, 1922); "Action and Thrills Galore in Priscilla Dean's 'Wild Honey,'" "A Good Picture that Will Go Big with Admirers of 'Meller'" (*Wild Honey*, Jewel Productions—Universal, 1922); and "Melodrama with All the Accompanying Action and Thrills" (*The Snarl of Hate*, Bischoff-SR, 1927).²⁷

And second, a more extensive set of examples from the later classical period: "a cinch in those spots that like their entertainment melodramatic and timed at a lightning pace" (*King of Alcatraz*, Paramount, 1938); "melodrama of international intrigue . . . Naturally the story promises to be thrilling and suspenseful" (*International Spy*, Columbia, 1938); "it contains just about everything melodramatic the cinematograph has discovered since the 'The Great Train Robbery,' including a train robbery thrillingly reminiscent of that one" (*Jesse James*, Fox, 1939); "a melodrama out of the headlines, this compact, punchy thriller should be an exhibitor's delight" (*Hotel Berlin*, Warner Brothers, 1945); "Lewis Milestone's direction punches home the melodrama for full suspense and excitement" (*The Strange Love of Martha Ivers*, Paramount, 1946); "Murder Mystery Is Tidbit for Melodrama Fans" (*The Mysterious Intruder*, Columbia, 1946); "socko melodrama loaded with suspense and tension" (*The Killers*, Universal, 1946); "there is a swiftness of pace in the plot and an abundance of action in this film which is designed for devotees of the melodramatic film. It possesses the elements of excitement and suspense required for this type of en-

tertainment" (*The Lone Wolf in Mexico*, Columbia, 1947); "a fast and forceful picture, direct and strong in its appeal to the admirers of melodrama in the raw" (*Framed*, Columbia, 1947); "title strength will go a long way to selling 'The Gangster' to the melodrama trade, just as it did with King Bros. previous 'Dillinger'" (*The Gangster*, Monogram, 1947); "script wanders through 99 minutes without attaining the pace or suspense necessary for melodrama" (*Too Late for Tears*, United Artists, 1949); "a brutally taut melodrama dripping with blood, decorated with corpses, gunplay, slugging matches and psychiatry" (*White Heat*, Warner Brothers, 1949);²⁸ "well-made thriller, packed with suspense, for deep-dyed meller fans" (*The Threat*, RKO, 1949); "gripping melodrama . . . unwinds with a maximum of suspense and swift-paced action" (*Where the Sidewalk Ends*, Fox, 1950); "a gripping thriller made to order for the melodrama fan" (*Fourteen Hours*, Fox, 1951); "the general melodrama fan will find it easily pleasing" (*The Big Heat*, Columbia, 1953); "the melodrama lies in the mounting terror" (*The Desperate Hours*, Paramount, 1955); "program meller featuring violent action" (*Hot Summer Night*, Metro-Goldwyn, 1957); "good man-hunt thriller for general meller release" (*The Shadow on the Window*, Columbia, 1957); "an old-fashioned gangster melodrama, super-saturated with gunfire and fear" (*The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond*, Warner Brothers, 1960); and "Alfred Hitchcock formula: shock meller with a couple of particularly lurid scenes" (*Psycho*, Paramount, 1960).²⁹ Hitchcock, it should be noted, along with Samuel Fuller, Fritz Lang, and Raoul Walsh, made films which were constantly labeled as melodramas in the trade press. Indeed, Lang was described by *Variety*, in a review of *Ministry of Fear* (Paramount, 1944), as "a master of getting the most out of mystery, intrigue and melodrama," while Arthur Knight, in a review of *The Paradine Case* (Selznick, 1947), wrote the "the numerous films produced by Alfred Hitchcock have won for the director top honors as the creator of tense, absorbing murder melodramas," and in a column entitled "Selling Approach," the *Motion Picture Herald* advised exhibitors to use the following copy in advertising *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (Paramount, 1955) to the public: "suspense beyond 'Rear Window' or 'To Catch a Thief.' The master of melodrama, who does hair-raising thrillers for everybody's entertainment, has topped his own record for excitement on the screen."³⁰ Raoul Walsh, when asked in an interview in the *Velvet Light Trap* what kind of stories he liked best to direct, replied as follows: "'Adventure and melodramas' . . . 'Why melodrama?' 'I think you have got to

do something like that to keep the people in the theater interested—mystery, violence, chase.’” The interview continues: “‘Did you ever direct, or want to direct love stories?’ ‘Love stories? No.’”³¹

Several further points are worth making here. First, Hollywood actually produced two films with the word “melodrama” in the title, *Manhattan Melodrama* (1934) and *Washington Melodrama* (1941). Both were made by MGM (of all studios, the least likely to use a term in its titles that the industry as a whole had “shunned”). And both were described in the trade press along lines similar to those I have just tried to outline. Hence, of the former film: “action meller . . . a conventional semi-gangster-police yarn” (*Variety*) and “a great melodramatic story based on highlights of New York life for several decades back . . . It works up into some tense and gripping scenes” (*Film Daily*); and of the latter: “trite meller of good program rating” (*Variety*) and “the melodrama is very meller” (*Hollywood Reporter*).³²

Second, *Variety*’s review of *Manhattan Melodrama* specifically evokes the “lowest” and most popular form of stage melodrama in America at the turn of the century, “ten-twenty-thirty-cent” theater, in order to describe the film: “there is much to *Manhattan Melodrama*,” its reviewer writes, “that’s very ten-twenty-thirt.”³³ This reference serves to support Ben Singer’s thesis about the origins of both the particular understanding and definition of melodrama to which he draws attention and the genre or genres to which it was applied,³⁴ as well as further to illustrate their relevance in the later classical period, all the more so as this particular reference is by no means an isolated case. Hence the following: “Brings Back the Days of Ten-Twenty-Thirty Meller” (*Wid’s Daily* on *Thunderclap*, Fox, 1921); “the picture is straightaway melodrama that makes use of the complete routine of ten-twenty-thirty-cent theatrical properties” (*Motion Picture Herald* on *King of Chinatown*, Paramount, 1939); and “raw, sex-laden, Western pulp fiction . . . told in 10-20-30 style” (*Variety* on *Duel in the Sun*, Selznick, 1947).³⁵

Although not mentioned by name, ten-twenty-thirty-style melodrama specifically seems to be the type of melodrama discussed by Joe Laurie, Jr., in an article in *Variety* entitled “Those Pulse-Bumper Mellers” (hence his reference to “thrills and chills”).³⁶ At any rate, it is worth mentioning here that *Variety* used the terms “melodrama” and “meller” when reviewing and discussing plays, radio shows, and television programs to precisely the same extent, and in precisely the same ways, as it (and the other trade journals) used them when re-



Duel in the Sun—“raw, sex-laden, Western pulp fiction . . . told in 10-20-30 style.”

viewing and discussing films. Hence the following: “Wilfred H. Pettitt . . . has written melodrama with a vengeance . . . with smart dialogue and just enough hair-raising situations to keep a thrill-seeking audience in their seats” (*This Little Hand*);³⁷ “a psychological murder meller with suspense, pace and a good deal of atmosphere”³⁸ (*Hand in Glove*, by Charles K. Freeman and Gerald Savory);³⁹ “should continue to gain interest for those who like their fiction in melodramatic doses” (“Mystery Theatre,” WEA-F-NBC, New York); “straight melodrama spun out of a formula which is currently being used for at least half a dozen other crime-busters on the air” (“Big Town,” NBC, New York); “an action-packed, tense meller” (*Hands of Murder*, Dumont, New York); and “this latest addition to television’s rapidly-growing list of mellers” (“Danger” [“The Back Door”], CBS-TV, New York).⁴⁰

A further point to make here concerns the possibility that the trade press in general, and *Variety* (upon which I have relied a great deal) in particular,

might have been using the terms “meller” or “melodrama” in an unusual or particular way. While it might be possible to argue that the trade press has derived its understanding of melodrama from a distinct and particular tradition or sector of the melodramatic field as a whole (a point I shall return to at the end of this paper), it is, I think, highly unlikely that it (and the industry in general) would use such a well-known, “public” term in an idiosyncratic or unusual manner. Moreover, there is some evidence that the review press in general, to which the public would obviously have had greater access, used and understood the term in precisely the same way as the trade press itself. I have as yet only begun research on this, but I can at least cite the following instances, culled from advertisements and columns in the trade press and from the various volumes of film criticism edited by Anthony Slide: “a melodrama containing a little bit of everything . . . Mr. Fox and his staff have decided to put every known movie thrill into one picture” (*New York Post* on *Thunderclap*, Fox, 1921); “melodrama, on the screen, is identified almost entirely with fast physical action: cowboys or sheiks or cavalymen riding madly across country, men hanging by their teeth from the ledges of skyscrapers, railroad wrecks, duels, heroines floating on cakes of ice toward waterfalls, and every known form of automobile chase” (*Life* on *The Unholy Three*, MGM, 1925); “hard-boiled, action-crammed melodrama . . . has terrific suspense” (*New York Sun* on *Cornered*, RKO, 1946); “exciting melodrama . . . High in suspense and gripping realism” (*New York Daily Mirror* on *Crossfire*, RKO, 1947); “rough, tough melodrama with some exciting fight scenes” (*Fortnight* on *Body and Soul*, United Artists, 1947); “suspenseful melodrama” (*L.A. Citizen News* on *House by the River*, Republic, 1950);⁴¹ “there are thrills and melodrama—a railroad circus hold up, a train wreck” (*Cue* on *The Greatest Show on Earth*, Paramount, 1952); and, supporting earlier evidence about Hitchcock, “Alfred Hitchcock, grand master of the suspense melodrama, has returned to his first and greatest cinematic love with a humdinger of a thriller” (*Cue* on *Rear Window*, Paramount, 1954).⁴²

Finally, at this point, it should be noted that if there is any marking of the nature or appeal of melodrama in gender terms, that nature and that appeal are almost exclusively specified as male. Hence on *Virtuous Men* (S-L Pictures, 1919), “virile melodrama . . . The narration centers about the regeneration of a young man in the great north woods”; on *The Iron Trail* (United Artists, 1921), “Railroad Meller . . . usual type of Rex Beach he-man story”;

on *The Storm* (Universal, 1938), “class B he-man melodrama”; on *6,000 Enemies* (MGM, 1939), “Penal Melodrama” with a “manly masculine story”; on *Bad Lands* (RKO, 1939), “cactus country meller with an all-male cast”; on *They Are Not Angels* (Pathé, 1948), “story of a group of French paratroopers . . . narrated in punchy, masculine style with plenty of familiar Hollywood melodramatics”; and, on *The Racket* (RKO, 1951), “good cops-and-robbers melodrama: exploitable for masculine fan attraction.”⁴³

Within this context, female-centered narratives, sentiment, romance, and domesticity are seen (and marked) either as “anomalies” (to use Singer’s term) or else as separate and optionally additional components in potential (or actual) combination with melodrama itself. Hence the following: “vigorous melodramatic picture with an all-male cast and no semblance of romantic interest” (*Variety* on *The Fighting 69th*, Warner Brothers, 1939); and “it’s an all-male cast, but absence of romance is not missed in the rapid-fire unfolding of vivid melodrama” (*Variety* on *Sahara*, Columbia, 1943).⁴⁴ Hence, “‘The Girl with Champaigne Eyes’ contains plenty of heart interest and melodrama to make it an excellent subject of its type” (*Exhibitors Herald and Motography* on *The Girl with Champaigne Eyes*, Fox, 1918; my emphasis); “an action programmer. Its love story is secondary to the melodrama” (*Variety* on *Storm over Bengal*, Republic, 1938); “as the story is a tropical melodrama, there is practically no comedy, and, until the concluding sequences, no trace of romance” (*Motion Picture Herald* on *Whispering Enemies*, Columbia, 1939); “‘Heart’ emerges as a medley of simple romance in London’s East Side, interspersed with a little melodrama. The meller phase doesn’t bestir matters until almost an hour and a half from scratch when the limey hoodlums hijack Ike Weber’s pawnshop and beat up this kindly loan broker” (*Variety* on *None but the Lonely Heart*, RKO, 1944); “a melange of music, romance and melodrama” (*Film Daily* on *Night Train to Memphis*, RKO, 1946); “melodrama of parolees and officers who work with them, plus romance” (*Variety* on *Shockproof*, Columbia, 1948); and “threaded through the melodramatic phases are a number of touching scenes concerning Lovejoy’s wife” (*Variety* on *The Sound of Fury*, United Artists, 1950).⁴⁵ And hence, “‘Undercover Girl,’ by its very title, suggests a conventional melodrama with a twist in that a girl is the gangster’s foil” (*Variety* on *Undercover Girl*, Universal, 1950).⁴⁶

All this may help explain why the occurrence of terms or phrases like “romantic melodrama” or “domestic melodrama” in the trade press is in fact

relatively rare. I have come across only two examples of the latter, both of them perfectly consonant with the kinds of meanings I have outlined above: "domestic melodrama . . . With the picture nearing the two-hour mark it suddenly turns into a murder mystery" (*Motion Picture Herald* on *East Side, West Side*, MGM, 1949); and "interesting domestic melodrama about a psychopathic killer" (*Variety* on *House on Telegraph Hill*, Fox, 1951).⁴⁷ Some of the canonic fifties "domestic" or "family melodramas" (the latter a term I have not encountered at all) were called melodramas, but for similar or parallel reasons. Thus *Written on the Wind* (Universal, 1956) was described by the *Film Daily* as melodrama because it was "fraught with a variety of sensational themes"; *Home from the Hill* (MGM, 1960) was described by *Variety* as "full-blood [sic] melodrama" with "high-octane situations and characters"; and *Rebel without a Cause* (Warner Brothers, 1955) was described by *Variety* as a "strong action picture . . . a fairly exciting, suspenseful and provocative, if also far-fetched melodrama of unhappy youth on another delinquency kick" and by the *Film Daily* as a "heavy juvenile delinquency melodrama" containing "some startling, if luridly theatrical, scenes (a knife fight, a 'chicken' race with stolen cars) which will offer the full quota of thrills to seekers after the sensational."⁴⁸

The term "romantic melodrama" is slightly more common and also more complex. Mostly it is a hybrid term used to indicate a hybrid film (of the kind cited above).⁴⁹ However, there does seem to be one ambiguous instance, *All That Heaven Allows* (Universal, 1955), which is described by the *Film Daily* as "Romantic Melodrama Slated for High Grosses."⁵⁰ A clue here may be offered by the subsequent description, which talks of "all the ups-and-downs suffered by Miss Wyman and Hudson during their relationship," and more particularly by a description in the *Hollywood Reporter*, which speaks of how "Douglas Sirk's direction develops emotional tension."⁵¹ In other words, what motivates the use of the term "melodrama" here may not be the element of romance but a particular, perhaps "feminine" version of the tension and thrills offered putatively to men by more conventional action melodramas and thrillers. It is for this reason, too, I would suggest, that *Paid in Full* (Paramount, 1949) and *Autumn Leaves* (Columbia, 1956) were also called melodramatic;⁵² *Paid in Full* is described by *Motion Picture Herald* as having "a melodramatic story line that twists and turns in many directions," while *Variety* concludes its review of *Autumn*



Canonic fifties melodramas such as *Rebel without a Cause*, *Written on the Wind*, and *Home from the Hill* were called melodramas not for their domestic or familial scenarios but for their "high-octane situations," "sensational themes," and "full quota of thrills."

Leaves by noting that "direction by Robert Aldrich punches every dramatic scene for its full worth."⁵³

All that Heaven Allows, *Paid in Full*, and *Autumn Leaves* were all also described as women's films (or marked in one way or another as of particular potential interest to women).⁵⁴ However, from a total of over 490 reviews of over 160 such films,⁵⁵ these, along with reviews of *The Toy Wife* (MGM, 1938), *Forgotten Women* (Monogram, 1949), *A Life of Her Own* (MGM, 1950), *Hilda Crane* (Fox, 1956), and *Another Time, Another Place* (Paramount, 1958), were the only instances I could find in which the terms "melodrama," "meller," or "melodramatic" were used in ways which appear to differ from the (predominant) kinds of use I have outlined above.⁵⁶ In all other instances, the use of these terms is standard. Hence: "Murder Melodrama" (*Motion Picture Herald* on *Leave Her to Heaven*, Fox, 1945); "the details having to do with the slaying lend a melodramatic touch that makes for suspense" (*Film Daily*

on *Mildred Pierce*, Warner Brothers, 1945); "a feat of melodramatic story-telling which achieves also the result of maintaining suspense of unique intensity down to the final sequence" (*Motion Picture Herald* on *Nora Prentiss*, Warner Brothers, 1947); "an arresting suspense melodrama" (*Hollywood Reporter* on *The Reckless Moment*, Columbia, 1949); "femme slanted melodrama . . . The plotting is geared to Robert Siodmak's suspense-developing technique" (*Variety* on *The File on Thelma Jordan*, Paramount, 1949); and "it combines an adult love story with melodrama" (*Variety* on *No Man of Her Own*, Paramount, 1950).⁵⁷

However, the main point to make here is that the use of terms like "melodrama," "meller," and "melodramatic," although very common, as we have seen, in trade reviews, are actually rather rare in reviews of women's films—precisely because these films usually lack the elements that conventionally define these terms from the trade's point of view.⁵⁸ Depending upon the precise nature of the films themselves, "love story" (as in *Variety's* review of *No Man of Her Own*), "romance," "soap opera" (from the late forties on), and "mother love story" (or "story of mother love") are much more common.⁵⁹ By far the commonest term, though, and one that is used to describe all the different kinds of women's films, is, simply, "drama," as in the following: "Domestic Drama" (*Motion Picture Herald* on *A Bill of Divorcement*, RKO, 1932); "Drama" (*Motion Picture Herald* on *Imitation of Life*, Universal, 1934); "compelling emotional drama" (*Hollywood Reporter* on *Jezebel*, Warner Brothers, 1938); "intense drama, with undercurrent of tragedy" (*Variety* on *Dark Victory*, Warner Brothers, 1939);⁶⁰ "strong triangle drama" (*Variety* on *Back Street*, Universal, 1941); "Romantic Drama" (*Motion Picture Herald* on *The Constant Nymph*, Warner Brothers, 1943); "A Romantic Drama of High Excellence" (*Film Daily* on *Enchantment*, RKO, 1948); "Poignant, Affecting, Romantic Drama" (*Film Daily* on *My Foolish Heart*, RKO, 1949); "good adult drama with strong distaff appeal" (*Variety* on *The Blue Veil*, RKO, 1951); "Woman's Drama" (*Motion Picture Herald* on *Paula*, Columbia, 1952); "good romantic drama" (*Film Daily* on *Never Say Goodbye*, Universal, 1956); and "marital drama with appeal mainly for the distaff side" (*Film Daily* on *There's Always Tomorrow*, Universal, 1956).⁶¹

The final set of points I would like to make concerns the status and possible provenance both of this particular term and of the woman's film in general, though I would like to stress that much of what I have to say here is either speculative and conjectural or based on secondary sources (or both).



The trade press consistently labeled "women's films" as "drama" rather than melodrama, as with *Dark Victory* ("intense drama, with undercurrent of tragedy") and *There's Always Tomorrow* ("marital drama with appeal mainly for the distaff side").

In a neutrally descriptive generic sense, the term "drama" seems to imply any noncomic film lacking in marked physical action, suspense, or violence. However, it also on occasion seems to have value-laden overtones—drama is, as it were, a classier term (and a classier genre) than western or thriller or horror film—or melodrama. (In the words of *Moving Picture World*, "melodrama takes place after true drama chiefly because it aims to give a thrill rather than an edifying emotion.")⁶² And this would certainly be consonant with the status of the woman's film in Hollywood. For although, as some of the reviews I have cited indicate, individual women's films could, like individual melodramas, be judged as good, bad, or indifferent, the genre as a whole occupied not a lowly or humble position in Hollywood but, rather, a lofty one. Indeed, what were adjudged to be the finest women's films were also consistently regarded (along with what were adjudged to be the finest social problem films, biopics, biblical epics, and literary adaptations) as exemplifying the industry and its product at their best.⁶³ It is thus significant that, on the one hand, very few women's films, or dramas of any kind, were made either by Hollywood's Poverty Row studios (PRC, Monogram, Republic, and the like) or by B units at the majors, and, on the other, that an independent director like Samuel Goldwyn, obsessed as he was with making prestigious, "culturally respectable," "quality" films, should have specialized in woman's films and dramas since the early 1920s.⁶⁴

Certainly one important reason for this was the industry's presumption—sometimes in the face of the statistical evidence with which it was occasionally presented—that women not only constituted an important sector of the industry's audience in their own right, but that they also played a key—and usually decisive—role in choosing which films heterosexual couples went to see together.⁶⁵ Why the term "drama," though? And were there any particular reasons, other than purely financial ones, why women were courted as patrons, why the films marked out for them were so highly valued, and why efforts were made, in making them, to draw on sources either known, or assumed, to appeal to them?

On the first point, I would like to suggest that there may be a connection between drama and the term (and the genre) first coined and defined by Denis Diderot: *drame*.⁶⁶ This would help to account both for its prestige and for the connection between the term itself and certain elements—notably domesticity and romance—characteristic both of *drame* and the woman's film.⁶⁷

On the second point, it is worth reiterating the

truism that both cinema and vaudeville tried to attract female patrons to lend the entertainments they provided an aura of respectability both generally and in the eyes of the middle classes in particular.⁶⁸ One of the reasons for this, in turn, was that women, and particularly wives and mothers, occupied, as cultural categories and figures, a key role within the middle-class "Cult of True Womanhood," an ideology, or ideological current, whose roots lay in the nineteenth and late eighteenth centuries but whose influence was still strongly felt well into the twentieth.⁶⁹ To some degree *drame* itself could be argued as an early site of and for the articulation of this particular ideology. Usually, however, the major aesthetic site of and for not just its articulation but also its exploration (and, on occasion, the testing—and exposure—of its contradictions, limits, and restrictions) is said to be the novel in general and the domestic or sentimental or romantic novel in particular.⁷⁰ While a lot of important work has been done on this particular type of novel and its ideological contexts and roles in America in the nineteenth and late eighteenth centuries, very little has been done on its twentieth-century equivalents (particularly its early- to mid-twentieth-century equivalents).⁷¹ This is a pity because novels, stories, and serialized fiction by writers like Fannie Hurst and Olive Higgins Prouty (both of them highly respected figures outside avant-garde and modernist circles)⁷² were important sources not just of women's films (and radio soap operas) but of the "female culture" (or culture of "female concerns") that Hollywood seems to have conceived those films as addressing.⁷³ Traces of the Cult of True Womanhood are certainly evident, at any rate, in the vocabulary used in trade press reviews of women's films. This is particularly true of the early classical period (the twenties, thirties, and forties), and it is particularly marked in the use of a term like "human," which, as the following quotes exemplify, seems to draw on a notion of "womanhood" as that which, in accordance with the Cult, represents the height of "civilized" sensibility and feeling (i.e., "edifying emotion"). Hence: "has plenty of human and heart interest" (*Wid's Daily on The Blot*); "a human document faithfully translated into celluloid and sound" (*Variety on Back Street*, Universal, 1932); "superb direction by King Vidor and performances of distinguished merit by at least five players given this poignant human narrative of mismatching and self-sacrifice a deeply moving emotional power" (*Hollywood Reporter on Stella Dallas*, Goldwyn-UA, 1937); "here indeed is a production with heart and soul, with emotional strength, tenderness and humanity far beyond one's

fondrest expectations. Women especially will find it one of the most memorable theater-going experiences of the year" (*Film Daily* on *Claudia*, Fox, 1943); "a human story full of gentle and enchanting moments of romance" (*Film Daily* on *Sentimental Journey*, Fox, 1946); and "moving human drama . . . For femme patrons in particular it should be a winner" (*Variety* on *Magnificent Obsession*, Universal, 1954).⁷⁴

It would be absurd to argue, in conclusion, that domestic and romantic drama, and women's films as a whole, were entirely unaffected by nineteenth-century melodrama or were entirely unrelated to particular strands and traditions within it (especially as, indicated above, such films *were* on occasion called melodramas). The strand to which it seems to relate to most closely, though, is not the most popular strand, not the ten-twenty-thirty-cent strand, nor what Frank Rahill has called the classical strand, but rather the strand that he calls transitional or modified melodrama, which, judging by his description at least, was the strand affected most by middle-class values, the Cult of True Womanhood, the domestic novel, the romantic novel, and *drame*:

The "heart" became the target of playwrights rather than the simple nervous system, and firearms and the representation of the convulsions of nature yielded the centre of the stage to high-voltage emotionalism, examination of soul-states, and the observation of manners . . . The unhappy end became common.

Various aspects of this modified melodrama are illustrated in *La Dame aux Camélias*, much of that French drawing-room melodrama introduced to the English stage at the middle of the century by Tom Taylor and many others, many of the famous "Adelphi dramas" associated with the professional career of Celine Celeste, the Henry Irving repertory at the Lyceum, and *East Lynne*. In the United States relevant items were *Way Down East* and the plays of Bartley Campbell and James A. Hearne.⁷⁵

As for popular or classical melodrama, its principal locations in Hollywood, as the trade press clearly recognized, were the adventure film, the thriller, the horror film, the war film, and the western.⁷⁶

NOTES

1. The classical period I take to be 1917 to 1960. At the time of writing, my research is still incomplete.

2. I have read all the issues of *Variety* from January 1938 through December 1959, and most issues of the *Hollywood Reporter*, the *Film Daily*, and *Motion Picture Herald* for this period (though there are gaps in the BFI's

holdings of the *Film Daily* and the *Hollywood Reporter* in particular). For the earlier classical period I have read most issues of *Exhibitors Herald* and *Exhibitors Herald and Motography*, plus one or two early twenties issues of *Wid's Daily*, the *Film Daily*, *Variety*, and the *Moving Picture World*.

3. I have looked through the first nine volumes of the *Moving Picture World* (1907–1911), plus all the early volumes of *Exhibitors Herald* (1915–1917). *Biograph Bulletins* volume 1, 1896 to 1908, was compiled by Kemp R. Niver and edited by B. Bergstein (Locaire Research Group, 1971). Volume 2, 1908 to 1912, was compiled and edited by Eileen Bowser (Octagon Press, 1973).

4. Anthony Slide, ed., *Selected Film Criticism, 1912–1920* (1982), *1921–1930* (1982), *1931–1940* (1982), *1941–1950* (1983), and *1951–1960* (1985), all published by Scarecrow Press.

5. See, for instance, Jackie Byars, *All that Hollywood Allows: Re-Reading Gender in the 1950s Melodrama* (Routledge, 1991), 14; Christine Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," in Gledhill, ed., *Home Is Where the Heart Is* (BFI, 1987), 34–36; and Robert Lang, *American Film Melodrama, Griffith, Vidor, Minnelli* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 46–49.

6. None of the authors cited in the previous footnote give any references, footnotes, or examples to substantiate the points they make about the industry's use (or nonuse) of the term, though Lang does refer to its use in *The American Film Institute Feature Film Catalogue (1921–1930)* (Bowker, 1976), which claims in general to reflect contemporary terminology in generically labeling the films that it lists (46). Unfortunately, it, too, lacks specific references for the terms it applies to particular films.

7. Instances include Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Indiana University Press, 1987); Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," in Gledhill, ed., *Home*; and Laura Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama," in *ibid.*, all of them influential and important and all of them key to the standard account.

8. Russell Merritt, "Melodrama: Post-Mortem for a Phantom Genre," *Wide Angle* 5, no. 3 (1983); Ben Singer, "Female Power in the Serial-Queen Melodrama: The Etiology of an Anomaly," *Camera Obscura* 22 (January 1990).

9. See, for instance, Byars, *All that Hollywood*, 14: "The historical genre of 'melodrama' had long been understood and accepted (though generally denigrated) by the industry and by audiences"; and Gledhill, *Home*, 35. The most extreme statement of this particular point, though, is made in Scott Simon's review of Robert Lang's book in *Film Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Summer 1990): 45: "From the time of Griffith's Biographs onwards, the film industry has understood and promoted melodramas as everything *but* melodrama, a word they (and the audience) shunned as meaning 'failed drama' or, at best, old-fashioned drama."

10. Gledhill, *Home*, discusses the relationship (and opposition) between melodrama and realism at some length and from a number of points of view. (See in particular 8–9,

11–12, 12–13, and 26–27.) Ironically, it is Merritt, “Melodrama,” who articulates the most extreme (and straight-forward) version of this particular point: “Since at least 1911, when Selig advertised *The Two Orphans* as a movie that ‘breathed NEW TRUTH into an OLD-FASHIONED melodrama,’ the term became associated with an antiquated or discarded concept of realism” (29).

11. Laura Mulvey appears to be the originator of this particular point in “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama.” She restates it in “Melodrama in and out of the Home,” in Colin MacCabe, ed., *High Theory/Low Culture: Analyzing Popular Television and Film* (Manchester University Press, 1986), where she refers to “the subject matter that defines the genre, associated above all with woman, the family, the home, passion, etc.” (94). Gledhill, *Home*, adopts a similar position, though she mixes in with it her thesis about the opposition between melodrama and realism (“in Hollywood, realism came to be associated with the masculine sphere of action and violence . . . In contrast, the woman’s film was identified with melodrama, siphoning off this pejorative ascription from Hollywood’s mainstream product” [21]), and later on she writes that “in the end there appears to be no absolute line of demarcation between melodrama and the woman’s film, but, rather, a contest between them” (36). Jackie Byars, though putting forward a similar position, also points out that concentration on a “small group of films” in writing on melodrama in the seventies “obscured the existence of other melodramatic genres, the melodramatic aspects of genres like the Western, the historical variation within individual melodramatic genres, and the relationship between kinds of melodramatic genres” (*All that Hollywood*, 14).

12. Gledhill, *Home*, 6, 11.

13. See, in particular, Mulvey, “Melodrama,” 94.

14. Omitting non-American films, whose distribution in the United States was intermittent, particularly before the war, and whose discussion in the trade press was irregular at best (and therefore potentially misleading), I make the exact figure 1,074. I should add, though, that as far as I can tell the terms “melodrama” and “meller” are applied in the same ways and with the same meaning to non-American films as they are to American ones, as the occasional instances I shall cite will I hope make clear.

15. *Variety*, August 25, 1948, 17.

16. *Variety*, April 16, 1920, 37; *Exhibitors Herald and Motography*, April 27, 1918, 10.

17. *Moving Picture World*, April 6, 1918, 128.

18. *Variety*, May 9, 1950, 8; *Variety*, January 3, 1948, 11; *Photoplay*, February 20, 1919, 72; Slide, *Selected Film Criticism*, 1912–1920, 270; *Variety*, June 12, 1946, 6; *Hollywood Reporter*, July 7, 1953, 3; *Variety*, November 14, 1945, 12; *Film Daily*, May 7, 1946, 6; *Film Daily*, July 25, 1946, 7; *Motion Picture Herald*, “Product Digest,” September 3, 577; *Motion Picture Herald*, “Product Digest,” December 17, 1955, 706; *Motion Picture Herald*, “Product Digest,” January 4, 1947, 3398; *Motion Picture Herald*, January 21, 1939, 40.

19. As, for instance, in “an illogical story, trickling over with melodrama” (review of *Forbidden Trails* [Fox] in *Variety*, May 21, 1920, 34); “it’s a film for the bloodthirstier and more credulous type of melodrama addict” (review of *Secrets of a Nurse* in *Motion Picture Herald*, November 19, 1938, 40); and “this film, produced by Robert Brassler in routine style, is intended for melodrama fans who don’t give a hoot that the tale is one that flies in the face of logic and believability” (review of *Behind Green Lights* [Fox] in *Film Daily*, January 16, 1946, 11). On verisimilitude, and verisimilitude and realism, see Ben Brewster, “Film,” in Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Michael Irwin, eds., *Exploring Reality* (Allen and Unwin, 1987); “Vraisemblance et motivation,” in *Figures*, vol. 3 (Seuil, 1969); Tzvetan Todorov, “The Typology of Detective Fiction” and “An Introduction to Verisimilitude,” in *The Poetics of Prose* (Cornell University Press, 1977) and *Introduction to Poetics* (Harvester Press, 1981).

20. *New York Daily Mirror*, May 20, 1916, 25; Slide, *Selected Film Criticism*, 1912–1920, 235.

21. *Film Daily*, March 15, 1946, 16; *Variety*, May 26, 1943, 8; *Motion Picture Herald*, “Product Digest,” December 17, 1955, 706; *Variety*, July 2, 1930, 25; Slide, *Selected Film Criticism*, 1921–1930, 535.

22. Alan Dale, “The Tear-Drenched Drama,” *Cosmopolitan Magazine* (January 1910); Singer, “Female Power,” 94.

23. Singer, “Female Power,” 95. To supplement the sources Singer uses, I quote here from an article called, simply, “Melodrama,” by Louis Reeves Harrison: “when the melodrama is shown on the screen . . . we miss that absolute essential to success, appropriate music. With the ‘melo’ disjointed from the ‘drama’ the thriller fails to thrill . . . Give us a thrill, stir our blood, but be careful about the way you do it. The moment is underdone or overdue, we can not stomach it at all” (*Moving Picture World*, May 13, 1911, 1058–1059).

24. Singer, “Female Power,” 94.

25. *Ibid.*, 95.

26. The use of the term “situations” here is particularly interesting (and by no means unique). It seems specifically to relate to the concept (and the aesthetic) of “situations” as discussed by Martin Meisel in *Realizations. Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton University Press, 1983), 39–42. Other instances include “conventional crook melodrama, offering very few if any new situations” (review of *Someone in the House* [Metro] in *Variety*, July 9, 1920, 26); “a rousing melodrama of situation and incident” (review of *The Whisper Market* [Vitagraph] in *Variety*, August 27, 1921); and “uninteresting meller about big town politician corruption . . . Filled with obvious situations” (review of *Who Is Hope Schuyler?* [Fox] in *Variety*, March 11, 1942, 8).

27. *Biograph Bulletins*, vol. 1, 133; *Moving Picture World*, March 12, 1910, 383; *Moving Picture World*, October 1, 1910, 749; *Variety*, April 17, 1914, 22; *Moving Picture World*, September 30, 1911, 978; *Exhibitors Herald*, April 7, 1917, 23; *Wid’s Daily*, September 18, 1921,

19; *Wid's Daily*, December 11, 1921, 4; *Film Daily*, February 5, 1922, 9; *Film Daily*, March 6, 1927, 8.

28. *White Heat*, along with *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers*, *The Killers*, *Framed*, *The Gangster*, and *Too Late for Tears*, already cited, and *The Threat*, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, and *The Big Heat*, cited below, is, of course, often considered an archetypal film noir. (All these films are listed in Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward, *Film Noir, an Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style* [Overlook Press, 1979]). In fact, nearly every other so-called film noir was labeled or described in the trade press as melodrama. Instances include *The Maltese Falcon* (*Variety*, October 1, 1941, 9), *This Gun for Hire* (*Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," May 21, 1942, 563), *Phantom Lady* (*Variety*, January 26, 1944, 12), *Double Indemnity* (*Variety*, April 26, 1944, 12), *Ministry of Fear* (*Variety*, October 18, 1944, 10), *Conflict* (*Variety*, January 13, 1945, 17), *Scarlet Street* (*Variety*, January 2, 1946, 8), *Detour* (*Variety*, January 23, 1946, 12), *Gilda* (*Film Daily*, March 14, 1946, 10), *The Chase* (*Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," October 19, 1946, 267), *Framed* (*Variety*, March 5, 1947, 8), *Out of the Past* (*Variety*, November 19, 1947, 8), *I Walk Alone* (*Variety*, December 17, 1947, 8), *Secret Beyond the Door* (*Variety*, December 31, 1947, 10), *Raw Deal* (*Variety*, May 19, 1948, 13), *Cry of the City* (*Variety*, September 15, 1948, 15), *Road House* (*Variety*, September 22, 1948, 8), *Kiss the Blood Off My Hands* (*Variety*, October 20, 1948, 11), *He Walked by Night* (*Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," November 13, 1948, 4381), *The Set-Up* (*Variety*, January 26, 1949), *The Asphalt Jungle* (*Variety*, May 10, 1950, 6), *Storm Warning* (*Variety*, December 6, 1950, 6), *On Dangerous Ground* (*Variety*, December 5, 1951, 6), *Pickup on South Street* (*Hollywood Reporter*, May 13, 1953, 3), *Rogue Cop* (*Variety*, September 1, 1954, 6), *The Big Combo* (*Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," February 19, 1955, 329), *Kiss Me Deadly* (*Variety*, April 20, 1955, 6), *Killer's Kiss* (*Variety*, September 21, 1955, 6), and *Slightly Scarlet* (*Film Daily*, February 27, 1956, 7). Some of the oft-cited ingredients of film noir are mentioned, from time to time, in these reviews. Hence, "private detective melodrama in the modern hard-boiled manner" (*Variety* on *Out of the Past*, November 19, 1947, 8); "taut melodrama, another in the unscrupulous woman cycle" (*Variety* on *Framed*, March 5, 1947, 8); "documentary melodrama" (*Motion Picture Herald* on *He Walked by Night*, November 13, 1948, 4381); and "backing the melodramatic mood is Victor Young's score, the low-key lighting used for the scenes, and other technical factors" (*Variety* on *The File on Thelma Jordan*, November 2, 1949, 10). However, what I would like especially to draw attention to here is the extent to which the element of "psychiatry" (as mentioned in the *Film Daily's* review of *White Heat*) is an element constantly marked in trade reviews, particularly in the mid to late forties, when in many ways the standard term for film noir was "psychological" or "psychiatric" (or, simply, "psycho") melodrama. Hence, "skillfully blended blood-and-thunder melodrama with psychological overtones" (*Motion Picture Herald* on *This Gun for Hire*, May

21, 1942, 563); "mystery melodrama with psychological twist" (*Variety* on *My Name Is Julia Ross*, November 14, 1945, 12); "another in the cycle of psychiatric pictures and like some of its predecessors is an absorbing and nerve-tangling melodrama that will keep audiences poised on the edges of their seats" (*Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," October 5, 1948, p. 3237); "solid psycho-meller" (*Variety* on *Possessed*, June 4, 1947, 6); "another psychological melodrama" (*Variety* on *The Gangster*, October 1, 1947, 14); "a strong entry in the psycho-melodrama cycle" (*Variety* on *The High Wall*, December 17, 1947, 8); "psycho-meller" (*Variety* on *Secret Beyond the Door*, December 31, 1947, 10); and "neurotic meller" (*Variety* on *On Dangerous Ground*, December 5, 1951, 6). *Variety's* review of *The Web* makes the same point in reverse, so to speak: "there are no Freudian angles cluttering up *The Web's* melodrama. Picture presents a crook who kills because he wants money and power and not because of some psycho-quirk springing from a past incident" (May 28, 1947, 47).

29. *Variety*, October 5, 1938, 4; *Motion Picture Herald*, February 3, 1938, 21; *Motion Picture Herald*, January 14, 1939, 43; *Variety*, March 7, 1945, 20; *Variety*, March 13, 1946, 6; *Film Daily*, April 10, 1946, 6; *Variety*, August 7, 1946, 15; *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," January 4, 1947, 3398; *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," March 8, 1947, 3514; *Variety*, October 1, 1947, 14; *Variety*, April 13, 1949, 11; *Film Daily*, August 26, 1949, 12; *Variety*, October 26, 1949, 18; *Variety*, June 28, 1950, 6; *Variety*, February 28, 1951, 13; *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," September 26, 1953, 2006; *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," September 17, 1955, 593; *Variety*, January 23, 1957, 6; *Variety*, February 27, 1957, 6; *Variety*, August 27, 1960, 6; *Variety*, June 22, 1960, 6.

30. *Variety*, June 22, 1960, 10; *New Movies*, January 1948, 4; Slide, *Selected Film Criticism, 1941-1950*, 182. *Motion Picture Herald*, June 16, 1956, 39. It might in this context be worth recalling that Tom Gunning has recently pointed to the possible relationship between many of Hitchcock's films and the theatrical tradition of Grand Guignol (in "Heard over the Phone: *The Lonely Villa* and the de Lorde Tradition of the Terrors of Technology," *Screen* 32, no. 2 [Summer 1991]: 192, n. 24).

31. "Raoul Walsh Remembers Warners," *Velvet Light Trap*, 15 (Fall 1975): 48.

32. *Variety*, May 8, 1934, 14; *Film Daily*, May 21, 1934, 7; *Variety*, April 23, 1941, 16; *Hollywood Reporter*, April 17, 1941, 4.

33. *Variety*, May 8, 1934, 14. On the "ten-twenty-thirty-cent" melodrama, see Frank Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), esp. 272-283.

34. Singer, "Female Power," 95.

35. *Wid's Daily*, August 14, 1921, 12; *Motion Picture Herald*, March 18, 1939, 52; *Variety*, January 1, 1947, 14. It is worth noting here that it is if anywhere in this context that melodrama as an old-fashioned form (or an old-fashioned form of melodrama) tends to be implied. Hence, on *Just Outside the Door* (Weber Production): "one of

those involved melodramas which were popular in 10-20-30 stock houses about the time Bryant tried to liberate silver" (*Variety*, January 28, 1921, 39); on *One Hour to Live* (Universal): "this is a gangster meller of the old school, written and directed in the rote of the ten-twenty-three days rather than in the modern treatment" (*Variety*, November 8, 1939, 14); and, on *Green Hell* (Universal): "Frances Marion's original screenplay is old-fashioned in both set up and dialogue: reminiscent of the 10-20-30 melodramas of three decades ago" (*Variety*, January 24, 1940, 22).

36. *Variety*, July 18, 1951, 59.

37. On the use of the term "situation" here, see note 26 above.

38. See note 28 above on film noir, for the significance of the term "psychological" here. Its use in reviews of radio and television programs, as well as films and plays, in the late forties and early fifties was quite common and suggests that film noir (or at least this aspect of film noir) was in fact a multimedia phenomenon. Other instances include "psychological melodrama" (on *Dark Hammock* by Mary Orr and Richard Denham, *Variety*, December 13, 1944, 44); "psychological melodrama" (*Murder without Crime* by Lee J. Thompson, *Variety*, December 12, 1945, 54); "an attempt to invest this show with more significance than the ordinary run of dramatizations is being made through a running commentary by a psychiatrist, Dr. Richard Hoffman" (*Detour*, ABC, New York, *Variety*, June 28, 1950, 28); "an effective psychological melodrama" (*Lucky Strike Theatre* ["Bubbles"], NBC-TV, New York, *Variety*, September 12, 1915); and "a clever peg for the series . . . the shamus telling the yarn in flashback to a femme psychiatrist. Otherwise the story was a melee of all private eye characterizations from Dashiell Hammett to Mickey Spillane" (*Cases of Eddie Drake* ["The Brass Key"], WABD, Dumont, New York, *Variety*, March 12, 1952, 31).

39. These plays, and many others, were actually billed as melodramas, as a review of *Maelstrom* by Ronald St. Clair makes clear ("it's billed as melodrama"), *Variety*, August 22, 1951, 66.

40. *Variety*, December 30, 1942, 42; *Variety*, December 6, 1944, 46; *Variety*, October 10, 1945, 30; *Variety*, September 22, 1948, 24; *Variety*, September 7, 1949, 34; *Variety*, September 27, 1950, 31.

41. It will by now be apparent, once again, that film noir features heavily among these examples. See also Herb Stone's review of *Double Indemnity* in *Rob Wagner's Script*, August 26, 1944, 10 (Slide, *Selected Film Criticism*, 1941-1950, 47): "Billy Wilder lands the season's most impactful melodramatic wallop with *Double Indemnity*."

42. *Wid's Daily*, "Newspaper Opinions," August 6, 1921, 3; *Life*, August 27, 1925, 26, Slide, *Selected Film Criticism*, 1921-1930, 300; ad in *Film Daily*, January 16, 1946, 4; ad in *Variety*, July 30, 1947, 11; *Fortnight*, September 12, 1947, 30, Slide, *Selected Film Criticism*, 1941-1950, 31; ad in *Variety*, May 3, 1950, 23; *Cue*, January 12, 1952, 16, Slide, *Selected Film Criticism*,

1951-1960, *Cue*, August 3, 1954, 15, Slide, *Selected Film Criticism*, 1951-1960, 108. It might be worth pointing out here, in addition, that those writing on films and the cinema in a non-film studies context use "melodrama" in this way (see, for instance, Richard Maurice Hurst, *Republic Studios: Between Poverty Row and the Majors* [Scarecrow Press, 1979], 2, 16, and 22, and Ethan Mordden, *The Hollywood Studies: House Style in the Golden Age of the Movies* [Alfred E. Knopf, 1988], 251). Benjamin Hampton, writing in the 1930s and an industry insider, uses the term in this way too in *History of the American Film Industry, from Its Beginnings to 1931* (Dover, 1970), 31, 41-42, 104 (where he refers to "melodramatic thrills"), and 342.

43. *Exhibitors Herald and Motography*, April 19, 1919, 38; *Wid's Daily*, November 6, 1921, 6; *Variety*, November 2, 1938, 15; *Motion Picture Herald*, May 27, 1939, 32; *Variety*, August 16, 1939, 14; *Variety*, June 2, 1948, 14. The same point applies to *Variety*'s reviews of plays. Hence *Command Decision*, billed as a "melodrama in three acts"; and the earlier *Sea Dogs*, also a "melodrama in three acts," is described as a "lurid and sometimes gruesome . . . tale of the high seas" with "an all-male cast" (*Variety*, October 8, 1947, 50 and November 8, 1939, 45).

44. *Variety*, January 10, 1940, 14; *Variety*, September 29, 1943, 8.

45. *Exhibitors Herald and Motography*, March 23, 1918, 26; *Variety*, December 14, 1938, 14; *Motion Picture Herald*, January 7, 1939, 38; *Variety*, October 4, 1944, 8; *Film Daily*, July 22, 1946, 10; *Variety*, January 26, 1949, 11. Melodrama, it should be noted here, is not just hybridized with romance (or, as the *Film Daily*'s review of *Night Train to Memphis* indicates, with music). It is quite commonly hybridized with comedy. Hence, *Motion Picture Herald*'s description of *It's a Wonderful World* (MGM, 1939) as "comedy melodrama" (April 8, 1939, 50), and its description of *The Gorilla* (Fox, 1939) as combining "two kinds of entertainment, crazy comedy and chilling, thrilling melodrama" (April 15, 1939, 48). It is rather more unusual, though, to find "ice extravaganza and melodrama combined," as they are in *Suspense* (Monogram, 1946), according to *Variety* (March 27, 1946, 12).

46. *Variety*, January 11, 1950, 6. It might be noted here that in the late thirties and early forties there existed possible equivalents to the "anomalous" serial-queen cycle of the late teens and early twenties in the form of, on the one hand, the *Nancy Drew* and *Torchy Blane* films produced by Warner Bros. and, on the other, of a cycle of films about female aviators which include *Tailspin* (Fox, 1939), *Woman in the Wind* (Warner Bros., 1939), and *Flight for Freedom* (RKO, 1943) and which are all labeled as "melodrama" by the trade press. The conjunctural reasons for the appearance of the two different cycles are, I am sure, both varied and distinct. In the case of the aviator films, at any rate, they would include the policy adopted by commercial airlines in the United States of using women in general, and female pilots in particular, to promote the idea that flying was safe. (See Joseph J. Corn, "Making Flying 'Think-

able': Women Pilots and the Selling of Aviation, 1927–1940," *American Quarterly* 32, no. 4 [Fall 1979].

47. *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," December 17, 1949, 122; *Variety*, March 7, 1951, 6.

48. See *Film Daily*, September 19, 1956, 47; *Variety*, February 10, 1960, 6; *Variety*, October 21, 1955, 6.

49. For instance: "Romantic Melodrama—For the melodrama die-hards there are a number of moments of unadulterated viciousness that should win their wholehearted approval" (*Film Daily* on *Two Smart People* [MGM], June 6, 1946, 8) and "romantic melodrama on sex and murder at the beach" (*Variety* on *Female at the Beach* [Universal], July 13, 1955, 6). This particular review continues by noting that the "melodramatic phase of the story is brought to the fore immediately with the death of Judith Evelyn."

50. See *Film Daily*, October 25, 1955, 10.

51. See *Hollywood Reporter*, October 25, 1955, 3.

52. In the *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," December 24, 1949, 130, and in *Film Daily*, April 13, 1956, 8, respectively.

53. See *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," December 24, 1949, 130, and *Variety*, April 18, 1956, 6.

54. See reviews already cited.

55. For a complete list of films and details of trade reviews consulted, see appendix. Ben Singer has informed me that around 1911 indications that specific films might be of particular interest to women, or might appeal especially to female audiences, begin to appear (i.e., in conjunction with a cycle of "mother love" films that include *The Mother* [1911], *The Eternal Mother* [1912], and *A Mother's Love* [1912]).

56. *Variety* described *The Toy Wife* as "an old-fashioned melo" (May 25, 1938, 17); the *Film Daily* reports that in *Forgotten Women* "a few sequences are a little over-melodramatic" (June 11, 1949, 6); the *Motion Picture Herald* describes *A Life of Her Own* as "a melodrama aimed straight at the tear ducts" ("Product Digest," May 12, 1950, 433); and *Variety* writes that in *Hilda Crane* "Miss Simmons suffers through a succession of melodramatic situations from being discovered by her husband in another man's hotel bedroom to attempting suicide" (May 2, 1956, 6). On the use of the term "situation" here, see notes 26 and 37 above.

57. See *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," February 29, 1945, 2778; *Film Daily*, October 1, 1945, 6; *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," February 8, 1947, 3457; *Variety*, December 24, 1947, 13; *Hollywood Reporter*, October 12, 1949, 3; *Variety*, November 2, 1949, 10.

58. By my calculations, the term is used for 34 films marked as of particular interest to women during the period January 1938 to December 1959, out of a total of 155 such films reviewed in the trade press during this period. Nearly all of these films are thrillers or hybrids. (See appendix for details.)

59. Hence, "capital romance, a cinch for the femme trade" (*Variety*, January 8, 1936, 12, on *Magnificent Obses-*

sion [Universal]); "a mature love story, told with insight and delicacy, this is aimed especially at feminine audiences" (*Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," October 21, 1950, 538, on *September Affair* [Paramount]); "high-class soap opera" (*Variety*, May 3, 21, 1961, 6, on *Return to Peyton Place* [Fox]); and "story of mother love" (*Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," September 2, 1950, 457, on *Three Secrets* [Warner Bros.]).

60. In "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama," Laura Mulvey proposed what Christine Gledhill describes as a "distinction between male and female point-of-view melodrama, demarcating the 'tragically' inclined family melodramas of Minnelli and Sirk from Sirk's work in the more humble spheres of the woman's film, centring on female protagonists" (10–11). Although it does not invalidate what is basically a theoretical distinction, it is important to note here that the terms "tragic" and "tragedy" are in fact very frequently used in trade reviews of women's films. They seem to be used principally to give the films status (see below) and to imply the presence of an "unhappy" ending (as here). Other examples include "strong romantic tragedy" (*Variety*, May 15, 1940, 16, on *Waterloo Bridge* [Universal]); "Tragic Domestic Drama" (*Film Daily*, December 13, 1946, on *Swell Guy* [Universal]); "a drama which moves as tragically and inexorably as a Greek tragedy to the bitter end" (*Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," October 19, 1946, 3261 on *Deception* [Warner Bros.]); and "the tale of a love unrequited, very great, and tragic" (*Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," April 10, 1948, on *Letter from an Unknown Woman* [Universal]).

61. See *Motion Picture Herald*, September 10, 1932, 40; *Motion Picture Herald*, December 1, 1934, 39; *Hollywood Reporter*, March 8, 1938, 3; *Variety*, March 15, 1939, 16; *Variety*, February 12, 1941, 14; *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," July 3, 1943, 401; *Film Daily*, December 7, 1948, 5; *Film Daily*, October 12, 1949, 4; *Variety*, September 12, 1951, 6; *Motion Picture Herald*, "Product Digest," May 17, 1952, 1366; *Film Daily*, February 23, 1956, 9; *Film Daily*, January 18, 1956, 8.

62. See review of *Bobbie the Coward* (Biograph), *Moving Picture World*, July 29, 1911, 209.

63. Hence, "another in a recent crop of artistic film successes which is a credit to the industry as a whole" (*Variety*, January 8, 1936, 12 on *Magnificent Obsession*) and "tastefully mounted, high quality production that ranks as a work of art" (*Hollywood Reporter*, October 27, 1950, 3, on *Harriet Craig*).

64. I would like to thank Lea Jacobs for drawing these points to my attention.

65. See, for instance, "'Men Top Pic Fans'—Gallup" (*Variety*, August 5, 1942, 3), and "Pollock Challenges Gallup Findings, Sez Women Sway Men's Pic Choices" (*Variety*, August 19, 1942, 12).

66. Denis Diderot, "On Dramatic Poetry," in Barrett H. Clarke, ed., *European Theories of the Drama* (Crown, 1965).

67. Hence, descriptions and synonyms like “eighteenth century plays which dealt with the domestic problems of daily life” (Phyllis Hartnoll, ed., *The Concise Oxford Companion to the Theatre* [OUP, 1972], 143), and “domestic tragedy” (Vera Mowry Roberts, *On Stage: A History of Theatre* [Harper and Row, 1974], 274).

68. See Russell Merritt, “Nickelodeon Theaters 1905–1914: Building an Audience for the Movies,” in Tino Balio, ed., *The American Film Industry* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), esp. 73–75.

69. See Glenna Matthews, “Just a Housewife”: *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (OUP, 1987), and Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966).

70. See Nina Baym, *Women’s Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820–1870* (Cornell University Press, 1978), Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of California Press, 1990), Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789–1860* (Octagon Books, 1975), Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (Knopf, 1977), Mary Kelley, *Private Woman. Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (OUP, 1984), and Helen Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings* (Harper, 1956).

71. For some discussion of novels written prior to the

1970s, see Madonne M. Miner, *Insatiable Appetites: Twentieth Century Women’s Bestsellers* (1984). Among the novels she discusses are *Gone with the Wind*, *Forever Amber*, and *Peyton Place*, all of which were made into films.

72. Both receive respectful entries in Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, ed., *Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature* (H. W. Wilson, 1942), see 693–694 (for Fannie Hurst) and 1136 (for Olive Higgins Prouty).

73. Hurst’s work, and the films based upon it, were particularly important, from *Humoresque* through *Back Street* to *Imitation of Life* (in terms of the film versions, then, from 1920 through 1959).

74. See *Wid’s Daily*, August 21, 1921, 2, *Variety*, August 30, 1932, 14; *Hollywood Reporter*, July 23, 1937, 3; *Film Daily*, August 19, 1943, 6; *Film Daily*, February 13, 1946, 7; *Variety*, May 12, 1954, 6.

75. Rahill, xv.

76. Arguably, the type of film that comes closest of all to “classical” melodrama, with its clear-cut heroes, villains, and heroines, its comic sidekicks and comic relief, its moments of action, spectacle, and conflict, its thrills, its performing animals, its hair-breadth escapes, its chases, its jokes, and its songs is, in fact, the singing western.

Appendix

This appendix lists films marked as women’s films (or as films of particular appeal or interest to women) in reviews in the trade press. It indicates which journals have been consulted for reviews on individual films and marks with an asterisk which journals marked the films in this way. In addition, it indicates (with an *m*) whether the terms “melodrama,” “meller,” or “melodramatic” were used in these reviews, and if so in which journals, and notes whether the film in question could also be described as a thriller or crime picture (*t*) and a film noir (*fn*). The films are also listed by year, from 1925 through

1959. I regard the listings for 1938 through 1959 as fairly complete, the films listed outside this period being generally well known, and reviews of them consulted especially. Other well-known films which might be (or have been) considered as women’s films but which do not appear to have been marked as such in the trade press itself have been listed separately. If a film was described in trade reviews as “drama,” I have indicated this as well with a *d* (along with the initials of the journal or journals that used the term), and, finally, for each year between 1938 and 1959, I indicate the overall number of films marked in one way or another as “melodrama” in *Variety* reviews.

Title	Journals Consulted	Melodrama	Drama	Melodrama in <i>Variety</i>
	1925			
<i>Stella Dallas</i> (Goldwyn-UA)	<i>FD</i> , <i>MPW</i> *, <i>V</i> *		d(<i>MPW</i>)	
	1932			
<i>A Bill of Divorcement</i> (RKO)	<i>MPH</i> , <i>V</i> *		d(<i>MPH</i>)	

<u>Title</u>	<u>Journals Consulted</u>	<u>Melodrama</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Melodrama in Variety</u>
	1933			
<i>Only Yesterday</i> (Universal)	<i>FD*</i> , <i>MPH</i> , <i>V*</i>		d(<i>FD</i> , <i>MPH</i> , <i>V</i>)	
	1934			
<i>Imitation of Life</i> (Universal)	<i>FD</i> , <i>MPH*</i> , <i>V</i>		d(<i>MPH</i>)	
	1936			
<i>Magnificent Obsession</i> (Universal)	<i>MPH</i> , <i>V*</i>			
	1937			
<i>Stella Dallas</i> (Goldwyn-UA)	<i>HR</i> , <i>V*</i>			
	1938			49
<i>Always Goodbye</i> (Fox)	<i>HR*</i> , <i>MPH</i> , <i>V</i>		d(<i>V</i>)	
<i>I Met My Love Again</i> (UA)	<i>HR</i> , <i>MPH*</i> , <i>V*</i>			
<i>Jezebel</i> (WB)	<i>HR</i> , <i>MPH</i> , <i>V</i>		d(<i>HR</i>)	
<i>The Toy Wife</i> (MGM)	<i>HR</i> , <i>MPH</i> , <i>V*</i>	m(<i>V</i>)		
<i>Wives Under Suspicion</i> (Universal)	<i>HR</i> , <i>MPH</i> , <i>V*</i>			
	1939			60
<i>Dark Victory</i> (WB)	<i>HR</i> , <i>MPH*</i> , <i>V*</i>			
<i>Intermezzo</i> (Selznick-UA)	<i>MPH</i> , <i>V*</i>			
<i>Love Affair</i> (RKO)	<i>HR*</i> , <i>V</i>		comedy-drama (<i>HR</i>)	
<i>Made for Each Other</i> (UA)	<i>HR*</i> , <i>V</i>		comedy-drama (<i>V</i>)	
<i>The Old Maid</i> (WB)	<i>HR*</i> , <i>V</i>			
<i>Stronger Than Desire</i> (MGM)	<i>HR*</i> , <i>V</i>			
<i>When Tomorrow Comes</i> (Universal)	<i>HR*</i> , <i>V*</i>			
<i>Zaza</i> (Paramount)	<i>HR</i> , <i>V*</i>			
	1940			56
<i>A Bill of Divorcement</i> (RKO)	<i>HR</i> , <i>MPH</i> , <i>V*</i>			
<i>Forgotten Girls</i> (Republic)	<i>HR</i> , <i>MPH</i>	m(<i>MPH</i>)t		
<i>Kitty Foyle</i> (RKO)	<i>HR*</i> , <i>MPH</i> , <i>V*</i>			
<i>Waterloo Bridge</i> (Universal)	<i>HR*</i> , <i>MPH</i> , <i>V*</i>		d(<i>MPH</i>)	

<u>Title</u>	<u>Journals Consulted</u>	<u>Melodrama</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Melodrama in Variety</u>
	1941			51
<i>Back Street</i> (Universal)	HR*, MPH*, V*		d(HR, V)	
<i>Blossoms in the Dust</i> (MGM)	V*			
<i>Cheers for Miss Bishop</i> (UA)	MPH, V*			
<i>The Great Lie</i> (WB)	HR*, MPH*, V*		d(MPH)	
<i>Hold Back the Dawn</i> (Paramount)	V*			
<i>Lydia</i> (UA)	MPH*, V*		d(MPH)	
<i>The Men in Her Life</i> (Columbia)	MPH*, V*			
<i>Suspicion</i> (RKO)	MPH*, V*		d(V)	
<i>A Woman's Face</i> (MGM)	MPH, V*			
	1942			61
<i>The Big Street</i> (RKO)	V*			
<i>Now, Voyager</i> (WB)	MPH, V*		d(V)	
<i>Random Harvest</i> (MGM)	MPH*, V			
	1943			45
<i>The Constant Nymph</i> (WB)	FD*, MPH, V*		d(MPH, V)	
<i>Claudia</i> (Fox)	FD*, MPH, V*		d(MPH)	
	1944			34
<i>The Eve of St. Mark</i> (Fox)	FD*, MPH, V*		d(FD)	
<i>Tender Comrade</i> (RKO)	FD, MPH*, V*		d(V)	
	1945			33
<i>Girl of the Limberlost</i> (Columbia)	FD, MPH, V*			
<i>Leave Her to Heaven</i> (Fox)	FD*, MPH, V	m(MPH)t	d(FD)	
<i>Love Letters</i> (Paramount)	FD*, MPH, V*		d(MPH, V)	
<i>Mildred Pierce</i> (WB)	FD*, MPH*, V	m(FD, MPH) t, fn	d(V)	
<i>Spellbound</i> (Selznick-UA)	FD, MPH, V*		d(V)	
<i>This Love of Ours</i> (Universal)	FD*, MPH*, V*	m(MPH)	d(FD, V)	
	1946			64
<i>Child of Divorce</i> (RKO)	FD*, MPH, V			

<u>Title</u>	<u>Journals Consulted</u>	<u>Melodrama</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Melodrama in Variety</u>
<i>Claudia and David</i> (Fox)	V*			
<i>Deception</i> (WB)	FD, MPH, V*		d(FD, MPH)	
<i>Faithful in My Fashion</i> (MGM)	V*			
<i>From This Day Forward</i> (RKO)	FD, V*		d(FD)	
<i>Her Sister's Secret</i> (PRC)	FD*, MPH, V		d(MPH, V)	
<i>Humoresque</i> (WB)	FD*, MPH, V		d(V)	
<i>The Locket</i> (RKO)	FD*, MPH, V	m(V)t,n	d(FD)	
<i>The Man I Love</i> (WB)	FD*, MPH, V	m(MPH, V) t		
<i>My Reputation</i> (WB)	FD*, MPH, V*		d(FD, MPH)	
<i>The Secret Heart</i> (MGM)	FD*, MPH, V		d(V)	
<i>Sentimental Journey</i> (Fox)	FD*, MPH, V		d(FD, MPH)	
<i>A Stolen Life</i> (WB)	FD, MPH, V*			
<i>Swell Guy</i> (Universal)	FD*, MPH, V	m(FD, V)t		
<i>That Brennan Girl</i> (Republic)	FD*, MPH, V		d(FD, V)	
<i>To Each His Own</i> (Paramount)	FD*, MPH*, V*		d(FD)	
<i>Tomorrow Is Forever</i> (Paramount)	FD*, MPH, V*		d(FD, MPH)	
	1947			41
<i>Cass Timberlaine</i> (MGM)	FD*, MPH, V*			
<i>Daisy Kenyon</i> (Fox)	FD*, MPH, V*	m(V)t	d(FD)	
<i>Desire Me</i> (MGM)	FD*, MPH, V*			
<i>Dishonored Lady</i> (UA)	FD*, MPH, V		d(FD)	
<i>Green Dolphin Street</i> (MGM)	FD*, MPH, V*		d(MPH)	
<i>The Guilt of Janet Ames</i> (Columbia)	FD*, MPH, V*		d(FD)	
<i>If Winter Comes</i> (MGM)	FD*, MPH, V		d(FD, MPH)	
<i>Night Song</i> (RKO)	FD*, MPH, V		d(V)	
<i>Nora Prentiss</i> (WB)	FD*, MPH, V*	m(MPH, V) t		
<i>The Other Love</i> (UA)	FD*, MPH*, V*			
<i>The Private Affairs of Bel Ami</i> (UA)	FD*, MPH, V*			
<i>That Hagen Girl</i> (WB)	FD*, MPH, V*	m(MPH, V)		
<i>Time Out of Mind</i> (Universal)	FD*, MPH, V		d(FD, MPH)	
<i>The Unfaithful</i> (Paramount)	FD, MPH, V*		d(V)	

<u>Title</u>	<u>Journals Consulted</u>	<u>Melodrama</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Melodrama in Variety</u>
<i>A Woman's Vengeance</i> (Universal)	FD*, MPH, V*	m(V)t		
	1948			61
<i>B.F.'s Daughter</i> (MGM)	FD*, MPH*, V*			
<i>Enchantment</i> (RKO)	FD*, MPH, V*		d(FD, V)	
<i>I. Jane Doe</i> (Republic)	FD*, MPH*, V	m(V)t		
<i>Letter from an Unknown Woman</i> (Universal)	FD, MPH*, V		d(FD)	
<i>The Sign of the Ram</i> (Columbia)	FD*, MPH*, V		d(FD, MPH)	
<i>The Snake Pit</i> (Fox)	FD*, MPH, V		d(FD)	
<i>The Velvet Touch</i> (RKO)	FD*, MPH, V		d(MPH, V)	
<i>Winter Meeting</i> (WB)	FD, MPH, V*		d(FD, V)	
	1949			63
<i>Caught</i> (MGM)	FD, HR*, MPH, V	m(MPH)t, fn	d(HR)	
<i>East Side, West Side</i> (MGM)	FD, HR*, MPH, V*	m(MPH)	d(HR)	
<i>The File on Thelma Jordan</i> (Paramount)	FD, MPH, V*	m(V)t, fn		
<i>Forgotten Woman</i> (Monogram)	FD*, HR*, MPH, V	m(FD),t	d(HR, V)	
<i>Holiday Affair</i> (RKO)	FD*, HR, MPH*, V			
<i>The Lady Gambles</i> (Universal)	FD, HR, MPH, V*			
<i>Madame Bovary</i> (MGM)	FD*, HR, MPH, V*		d(FD)	
<i>Mrs. Mike</i> (UA)	FD, HR*, MPH, V		d(HR)	
<i>My Foolish Heart</i> (Goldwyn-UA)	FD*, HR*	MPH*, V*	d(FD, HR, MPH, V)	
<i>Night unto Night</i> (WB)	FD, HR, MPH, V		d(HR, V)	
<i>Paid in Full</i> (Paramount)	FD*, HR*, MPH, V*	m(MPH)		
<i>The Reckless Moment</i> (Columbia)	FD*, HR, MPH, V	m(HR, MPH, V)t, fn		
<i>Under Capricorn</i> (WB)	FD, HR, MPH, V*	m(HR, V)t	d(HR, MPH)	
<i>Whirlpool</i> (Fox)	FD*, HR, MPH, V	m(FD, HR, V)t, fn	d(MPH)	
<i>Without Honor</i> (UA)	FD, MPH*, V	m(V)t	d(FD)	

<u>Title</u>	<u>Journals Consulted</u>	<u>Melodrama</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Melodrama in Variety</u>
	1950			89
<i>Born to Be Bad</i> (RKO)	FD*, HR*, MPH, V			
<i>Harriet Craig</i> (Columbia)	FD, HR, V*		d(FD, MPH, V)	
<i>A Life of Her Own</i> (MGM)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*	m(MPH)	d(HR)	
<i>A Modern Romance</i> (Monogram)	FD, HR, MPH*, V	m(V)		
<i>No Man of Her Own</i> (Paramount)	FD*, HR, MPH	m(HR, V)t, fn		
<i>Our Very Own</i> (Paramount)	FD*, HR, MPH	m(HR, V)t, fn	d(V)	
<i>The Second Face</i> (Eagle-Lion)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*		d(V)	
	1951			56
<i>The Blue Veil</i> (RKO)	FD*, HR*, MPH, V*		d(FD, HR, V)	
<i>Chicago Calling</i> (US)	FD, HR, MPH, V*		d(V)	
<i>Her Sister's Secret</i> (PRC)	FD*, HR, MPH, V*			
<i>Payment on Demand</i> (RKO)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*		d(HR, MPH)	
<i>People Will Talk</i> (Fox)	V*		d(V)	
	1952			35
<i>Because of You</i> (Universal)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*		d(HR)	
<i>Invitation</i> (MGM)	FD*, HR, MPH*, V*		d(FD, HR, V)	
<i>My Cousin Rachel</i> (Fox)	FD, HR, MPH*, V	m(V)t	d(HR)	
<i>Paula</i> (Columbia)	FD*, HR, V*	m(V)t(?)	d(FD, HR)	
<i>Something to Live For</i> (Paramount)	FD, HR*, MPH*, V*		d(MPH, V)	
	1953			39
<i>Affair with a Stranger</i> (RKO)	FD*, HR, MPH*, V*		comedy-drama (MPH)	
<i>All I Desire</i> (Universal)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V		d(MPH)	
<i>The Bigamist</i> (Filmmakers)	V*			
<i>Lili</i> (MGM)	FD, HR, MPH, V*		d(V)	
<i>So Big</i> (WB)	FD*, HR, MPH*, V*			
<i>Torch Song</i> (MGM)	FD*, HR*, MPH, V*		d(MPH)	
	1954			40
<i>About Mrs. Leslie</i> (Paramount)	FD*, HR, MPH*, V*		d(V)	

<u>Title</u>	<u>Journals Consulted</u>	<u>Melodrama</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Melodrama in <i>Variety</i></u>
<i>Indiscretion of an American Wife</i> (Columbia)	FD*, HR*, MPH, V*		d(FD, MPH)	
<i>Magnificent Obsession</i> (Universal)	FD, HR, MPH, V*		d(FD, V)	
<i>Make Haste to Live</i> (Republic)	FD*, HR, MPH, V	m(FD, MPH, V)t		
<i>Rhapsody</i> (MGM)	FD*, HR, MPH, V*			
<i>This Is My Love</i> (RKO)	FD, HR, MPH, V*		d(MPH, V)	
	1955			46
<i>All That Heaven Allows</i> (Universal)	FD*, HR, MPH, V*	m(FD)		
<i>Foxfire</i> (Universal)	MPH, V*			
<i>Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing</i> (Fox)	FD, HR*, MPH			
<i>Lucy Gallant</i> (Paramount)	FD*, HR, MPH, V*		d(V)	
<i>One Desire</i> (Universal)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*		d(FD, HR, MPH, V)	
<i>Queen Bee</i> (Columbia)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*			
<i>Three Stripes in the Sun</i> (Columbia)	FD, HR*, MPH, V		d(V)	
	1956			34
<i>Autumn Leaves</i> (Columbia)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*	m(FD, V)		
<i>Gaby</i> (MGM)	FD*, HR, MPH, V*			
<i>Hilda Crane</i> (Fox)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*	m(V)	d(FD)	
<i>Miracle in the Rain</i>	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*		d(MPH, V)	
<i>Never Say Goodbye</i> (Universal)	FD*, HR*, MPH*, V*		d(FD)	
<i>The Opposite Sex</i> (MGM)	V*			
<i>There's Always Tomorrow</i> (Universal)	FD*, HR, V		d(FD)	
	1957			32
<i>An Affair to Remember</i> (Fox)	V*			
<i>Interlude</i> (Universal)	V*			
<i>Lizzie</i> (MGM)	V*			
<i>Man of a Thousand Faces</i> (Universal)	V*			
<i>Sayonara</i> (WB)	FD, HR, MPH*, V		d(V)	
<i>Until They Sail</i> (MGM)	FD*, HR, MPH*, V*		d(FD)	

<u>Title</u>	<u>Journals Consulted</u>	<u>Melodrama</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Melodrama in Variety</u>
<i>Wild Is the Wind</i> (Paramount)	<i>FD, HR, MPH, V*</i>		d(<i>FD, MPH, V</i>)	
	1958			47
<i>Another Time, Another Place</i> (Paramount)	<i>FD*, HR, MPH*, V*</i>	m(V)	d(<i>FD, MPH</i>)	
<i>A Certain Smile</i> (Fox)	<i>FD, HR, MPH*, V*</i>		d(<i>FD</i>)	
<i>Fräulein</i> (Fox)	<i>FD, HR, MPH, V*</i>		d(<i>FD</i>)	
<i>The Gift of Love</i> (Fox)	<i>HR, MPH, V*</i>			
<i>Home Before Dark</i> (WB)	<i>HR, MPH, V*</i>	m(V)t		
	1959			38
<i>Beloved Infidel</i> (Fox)	<i>V*</i>			
<i>Diary of a High School Bride</i> (AIP)	<i>FD, HR, V*</i>	m(<i>FD</i>)t		
<i>Imitation of Life</i> (Universal)	<i>FD, MPH*, V*</i>		d(<i>FD, MPH</i>)	
<i>Stranger in My Arms</i> (Universal)	<i>V*</i>			
<i>A Summer Place</i> (WB)	<i>FD*, MPH*, V*</i>		d(<i>FD</i>)	
<i>Woman Obsessed</i> (Fox)	<i>FD, HR, MPH*, V*</i>	m(<i>MPH</i>)t		
Other Films				
	1927			
<i>Seventh Heaven</i> (Fox)	<i>FD, MPW, V</i>		d(<i>FD</i>)	
	1931			
<i>Waterloo Bridge</i> (Universal)	<i>V</i>			
<i>Back Street</i>	<i>MPH, V</i>		d(<i>MPH</i>)	
	1938			
<i>Women Are Like That</i> (WB)	<i>MPH, V</i>		d(V)	
	1939			
<i>In Name Only</i> (RKO)	<i>HR, V</i>		d(V)	
	1940			
<i>All This and Heaven Too</i> (WB)	<i>HR, MPH, V</i>			
	1941			
<i>Hold Back the Dawn</i> (Paramount)	<i>HR, MPH, V</i>			
	1942			
<i>This Above All</i> (Fox)	<i>MPH, V</i>			
	1949			

<u>Title</u>	<u>Journals Consulted</u>	<u>Melodrama</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Melodrama in <i>Variety</i></u>
<i>Beyond the Forest</i> (WB)	<i>FD, HR, MPH, V</i>	m(<i>HR,</i> <i>MPH</i>)t		
<i>Ruby Gentry</i> (Fox)	<i>FD, HR, MPH, V</i> 1952		d(<i>FD, V</i>)	